Born to be Bound

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Born to be Bound

by Aerosol

Summary

Kid!AU, in which Hannibal and Will meet in an entire different way and situation occuring in their young lives. But the bond they form through it is just as intimate, if not more...

Notes

Hello my lovelies :)

The first part of this Two-Shot is a story, written for the topic of Spring FuriarossaAndMimma's Fannibal-Fanmagazine concerns with.

You can find her tumblr-blog here : http://hannibalartblog.tumblr.com/

And her deviantart here : http://furiarossaandmimma.deviantart.com/

It's definitely worth a look. She has some awesome ideas and is a lovely person ;3

Now enjoy reading (at least I hope you will enjoy ^^')

See the end of the work for more notes

My secret friend
I'll take you to the river
My secret friend
So we can swim forever

~My secret friend by IAMX feat Imogen Heap :
www.youtube.com/watch?v=-owM8D…

Will didn't know how long he'd been standing in front of this silly door and if he was honest with himself, time had somehow lost any meaning anyway.

Neither did he feel the need to check the clock at the end of the corridor even though he'd only have to turn his head. There was no meaning to that either. But he paid attention to the rhythm of his breath to keep himself from inadvertently hyperventilating (this happened every now and then when he got caught in one of the *bad pictures* that reigned his dreams. They were treacherous and loved to scratch the back of his mind even when he was awake). Sometimes, he also observed the arc of the sun as the light deviated from orange to an unfriendly reddish glow, the closer it dropped to the horizon's limit. Perhaps hours had passed. Half a day. Will had not noticed, just as little as the wardens of the orphanage had yet realized that he was missing in his bed. Today, Boris had the evening shift, and Will knew he was always *slightly* drunk at this time and gave a swift, dull look into the dim rooms before the door creaked and closed again. He shifted his weight from one leg to the other, trying to prevent emerging numbness in his limbs. He had to be prepared to run like hell soon it was needed. If he got caught in the hallway now the penalty would be harder than the usual food ban. They had caught him twice already while he took walks outside the allowable outlet…

At least he thought grimly*, this time I've got a good reason to do so.*

The area inches above his hip still throbbed where Vincent had got hold of him hours ago. He had punched him harder than usual, with more determination than true anger. It wasn't the first time Vincent and his gang had chosen him for their *games*. Since he proved not too social and preferred to shield himself from every event as much as possible, he was alone and strange to the public, and thus a perfect victim for the bigger boys to reduce their frustration about things they couldn't change. In those four months that Will lived in the orphanage he had learned to put up with a lot and keep his mouth shut to avoid further trouble. He fought back often though, but the battles were decided quickly when it came to four or five kids surrounding him at once. Even the wardens looked away, shrugging their shoulders and tolerating such activities as 'little tussle'. That the *little tussles* were prone leading to blood flow and breaking one of Will's fingers on occasion was generously ignored. All in all, the kids were merely a starving source of income and one could be lucky if they even knew some of their names.

Today, Will sincerely believed that Vincent would have broken him something bigger than a finger if he had not been interrupted. Something that actually **never**occurred because no one dared to intervene against his gang.

And that's why he was here now. Waiting.

He took a deep breath and tried to calm down. *He's not going to eat you*, he told himself. After all, he had never met him in a hostile sense, if he had met him at all, and after the events he had witnessed today, he felt little need to do so. But there was something in the dark eyes that raised a fundamental fear in his flesh and awoke the urge for escape funneling through his blood .... Will shook his head frantically and called his mind to reason. It did not matter. He would do what he had come for, and then he would go back. Stop, full stop, finish. It was a flinch of courtesy, not more.

Mentally prepared like that he raised a clenched fist and knocked timidly on ashen-colored wood. It was a puny sound he produced and yet it pierced him through marrow and bone. Immediately he turned his head, listened to the tense quietness to identify the echo of approaching steps.
Nothing. All that joined him was the ever lasting, colossal silence of this house.

He knocked again. A bit bolder this time. A little louder.

No answer.

“Hannibal?” His voice was a pinched whisper. “Hannibal, it's me, Will. ...The one with the glasses?”

Again, no reaction. Slowly but surely, he began to feel stupid.

“Hey, are you asleep?” He knocked a third time. Nothing. Nervousness crept in. He thought to knock a fourth time, but in the middle of movement he unfolded his fist so that his bare fingertips stroked the smoothly sanded surface. He did not know what to do. Go back empty-handed? He couldn't stand the idea for he had never liked to be in someone’s debt. But if he waited a little longer they’d find him for sure and he didn't really fancy doing that as well.

He was just about to give up when he heard the crunch an old bed frame made when a body rose from it. Then steps, light as a feather. The handle of the door opened and shoehorned inside. The wood sang softly. Through a narrow cleft one blood-brown eye looked out of the surge of darkness and impaled itself directly into Will’s bright blue. Deeply shocked, he took a step back. A few seconds were needed until his bouncing heartbeat normalized again. The staring eye waited in silence. Will cleared his throat. *Don’t be ridiculous. He's just a child, like you. A few years older, but still. A child.*

“H-hi,” he stammered, looked down in defense and in the next moment he was angry to act with such insecurity. He had never been good at communicating with other people, let alone looking into their eyes. He did not know why. It was an innated behavior.

Hannibal did not return his greeting. He waited, surrounded by blackness and tranquillity. Will did not take it personal. As far as known to him, Hannibal spoke to nobody since he had been brought into the orphanage three weeks ago. He always seemed composed and serious, but soon as something happened around him he did not like in particular he relied on explosive tantrums that often ended in brawls, damaging his chosen opponents till bare bone. It was said he even had bitten off a boy's ear lobe and chewed on it twice before spitting it out. Stories branding him as the mysterious, and often *feared* outsider. At this moment, Will cared very little about that. He believed that exactly this range of traits had saved him ftom a painful evil today, and it meant a lot to him. *Too much, always **too** much* as his father would have said.

So he pulled himself together and doggedly held out an arm to the eye's direction. He suppressed a tormented groan as the tensing of his used muscles called the hematoma in mind that grew near his armpit like purple nettles.

"Thank you for what you've done recently." he muttered cumbersomely. "I mean – if you hadn't been there, I'd ... well, just, thank you." Aimlessly, his hand swayed in the air. Hannibal's eye fell on it. He did not take it, watched it like a rare insect. Will's face was burning, and he did not know why.

"Okay, so, that's all I wanted to say. Bye." he mumbled, turned on his heel and ran, heading straight into the hallway to scurry to his chamber without being seen.

He found Hannibal strange. Odd, maybe. But, to be honest, he did not find him scary.

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Hannibal listened as the nimble steps of the younger boy faded and how his breath busily pumped through the narrow chest and slim body. He waited until he heard nothing anymore. Then he closed the door and returned to his bed. He looked to the ceiling for an hour with open, expressionless eyes. Then his lids sank down and he fell asleep.

His screams began when the moon clambered Lecter Castle's heights in white, pastel pale splendor.

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"Hey, *Willy*, what are you doing there?"

Will's body stiffened when he heard the twang of the known and hated voice in his back.

He knelt on the edge of a lake girdling the castle like a flooded moat. Plucking a few crumbs from the bread he had plugged secretly at lunch he tried to feed a swan which isolated

silhouette cut through the murky water like a ghost. Its plumage was midnight black and its upright posture almost royal and elegant. It impressed Will. After some unsuccessful attempts in the last few days he had finally managed to entice the bird so close that he could feed it. It had taken longer than he was used to, but that did not bother him. He liked animals. And animals liked him. This was no big secret. And he was patient when he needed to be. He felt sorry for the swan because it seemed to be on its own, something Will thought it had not been earlier. Probably the arriving tanks had chased away its family or squashed them under their raging, relentless weight. Monsters made of metal, with even more monsters in their baggy bellies that came out roaring and shooting. Will had lost his home and family to such monsters too. He felt not just pity for the swan- he felt a sense of sour solidarity.

He threw a larger chunk into the water and the Swan dipped its majestic, slender neck down to catch the offered food.

Will smiled.

A hand grabbed roughly into his curly hair and yanked his head back. He looked at Vincent's grinning, chubby face.

“Willy, I'm TALKING to you!” spat the boy above him. A few drops of saliva fell on his cheeks and the tip of his nose. Will’s smile died before it could be born in fullest. The bag with the bread slumped from his hand and brittled on the ground.

“I share my lunch.” he said. So calm and collected as he would not have to hold back tears just now because the tug at his hair roots was so strong he wanted to cry out. It stretched Vincent’s grin only wider. His lucid green eyes squinted to the lake. Behind him, Will could detect the bulky shadows of his friends. Like a personal front of flesh and daffiness they stood and watched the spectacle with malicious pleasure.

“With whom? That feathered rat?” Vincent sneered over him and his face contorted into a derogatory grimace. “Aww, has Willy found a little friend? *Sweet*.”

Will’s thinking encumbered with foreboding. He felt the aggressiveness coupled with boredom and evil emanating from Vincent. It sowed in his perception like a second, thickly pulsating aura belted in adrenaline.

Will stood up and grabbed Vincent's hand, wriggled and shook to free himself from his grip, which did not succeed. Vincent turned to his entourage.

“Petrov, give me one of the stones there.” he ordered gruffly. Petrov, similarly shaped like a cupboard and as shrewd as one, followed his imperious words without question. He went to the bank till his right foot splashed into the water and leaned forward with a groan. He fished a stone from the ground that had the size of a pine cone, and threw it to Vincent.

Will realized what they were up to. He squirmed even more in his growing fury.

“Get away!” he called to the swan. “Leave!”

Of course the swan did not obey him. On the contrary it swam closer, driven by his voice and the scent of the bread bathing in the dirt. Will cursed and hit his nails into Vincent's wrist. He managed to scratch a few dry, rust-red scratches into skin before he was bumped onto the frosty ground with a contemptuous snort**.** He landed on his back, his head colliding on hard soil. A dull pain shot through his body like a slithering eel. He writhed.

He heard Vincent laugh. His comrades joined him seconds later, a choir of blind animosity. Will did not understand how such thing could already occur in the simple temper of a child. He did not understand how it was born at all. (He would not know until he was an adult and even then he still found it disgusting).

“I'll give your shitty bird something real to eat!” called Vincent, let the stone leap in the air before he caught it again and threw. With widened eyes Will watched as the stone rushed through the air, similar to the shaft of a spear aiming at an enemy. He held his breath when it splashed a few inches next to the swan’s shape. The startled animal straddled its magnificent wings and made a chattering sound reminiscent of an indignant outcry. Vincent huffed in dissatisfaction. “The brute has not kept still. Next time I’ll hit the beak. Petrov, a bigger one!”

Petrov hastily tried to fulfill his friend’s request.
He did not get far.

Before he could pick up the next stone, he was grabbed by the collar from behind and maneuvered off balance with a neat kick in the butt. Wildly flailing his arms and wearing a rarely haphazard look on his face he tumbled into the water and was swallowed by the lake for a few moments until he bobbed up again, spitting out and filling his lungs with fresh oxygen.

Vincent opened his mouth to say something, but was interrupted by the fist slammed into his nose and his words replaced with a doggish yelp.

Will lifted his head and watched with irritated wonder, as a boy, who had meanwhile made himself comfortable sitting on Vincent's chest dealt out blow for blow in tireless rhythm that soon molded the misshapen face pied and swollen. Will only needed to glance at the ash-blond strands clinging to his heated cheeks and forehead to recognize him**.** He had only seen *one* child to use his fists with such simple monotony.

“Hannibal.” he managed to choke out and struggled to his feet. “Hannibal!”

Hannibal did not hear him, and if he did he did not care. He was too busy to peel the rosy flesh from Vincent's plump skull. This, however, had started to scream and squirm. Having Hannibal's knees squeezed into his sides like heavy anchors he gasped for air and tasted the blood that ran continuously from his battered nose. Will could not see his eyes, but even his cronies could know that he stank of fear and panic and that it reflected in his iris. Those just took part in the events after they had overcome the first thrust of shock and their brains linked to physical condition again. They ran and wrenched Vincent from Hannibal, beating, punching and kicking him. One, fighting against four. No one cared about the slightest principle of fairness.
Without thinking Will sprinted to the boys and threw himself into the destructive crowd. He

managed to wrap his arms around Vladislav's sinewy neck and heave on his back to prevent him from further beating. Fired vituperations swept from the intricate mouth as the unwanted weight besieged his body like a blood eating parasite and left him stumbling. Will was slim but heavier than he looked and he used the confusion of his opponent immediately to his advantage. He would have wrestled Vladislav to the ground when Vincent had not appeared behind him and hit him between the ribs. Will coughed out a chunk of viscous saliva clutching his side. The wounds of yesterday had not started to heal yet and the new bruises penetrated him with a freshly heated shaft of ardent agony. His breath ground down his throat like sandpaper. From the corner of his eye he saw a foot approaching and rolled quickly to the right, but could not prevent the leathery toecap touching his lips. They burst open and he tasted metal on his tongue. He felt sick. A kick in the pit of his stomach intensified the feeling and he folded his arms reflexively around his torso. He wanted to get up, wanted to help Hannibal who had to cope with almost *all* of these bastards. However, Vincent put a spoke in his wheel by taking a seat upon him and patting his cheek with disgusting friendliness before he resoundingly slapped it with his flat hand.

"Hey, where are you going? *You* belong to me." he grunted. The blood of his nose had smeared his chin and mouth in a scarlet red**.** He recalled the demon of vengeance from a medieval era. Will writhed beneath him, punched with his hands on his thighs, lower abdomen, all he was able to catch, but it did not help. Vincent laughed.

„You miserable worm." he judged nasally. He bent down so deep that their foreheads touched as he spoke. "You should have been a girl. A small, delicate girl ... shall I cut you a second hole down there, huh? Want me to make you my small, delicate gi-"

In this second, Hannibal pulled him down from Will, levered his right arm back and bent it limitlessly. His expression was characterized by mechanical indifference.

A deafening crack echoed across the place. Like a branch being minced with a French guillotine.

Vincent's face, shining in his foul sweat, gave away all its color, the flesh turned white as chalk and his pupils shone with a feverish black. Then, he opened his mouth and let out a shrill scream.

Hannibal had broken his arm.

Will's heart was pounding harshly in his ears and he felt dizzy. The trampling of the other boys as they ran towards Vincent resembled an earthquake. He tried to sit up, failed, leaned on his palms. It was too much. The sounds, the voices, the bawling. The smell of acid blood and salt, the flavor of copper in his mouth and feel of liquid which paved over his neck and ate into the collar of his shirt with a smacking gulp. For the blink of an eye he was blind and could not cope with the world around him or the processes inside his own body and mind. He felt the first signs of a coming seizure crawling under his skin and licking at his organs. He hated that, wanted to stop and calm down, but he could not, he could not... he noticed in passing that he trembled uncontrollably from head to toe, clasping his ears with his hands and crouching on the ground in utter paralyzation.

He perceived a second existence in his vicinity, watching him, but he ignored it. He heard the swan's chatter in the distance. He groaned.

And nearly snapped as someone grabbed him by the sleeve and led him back to his feet.

"N-no. *No*." he stammered, could not bear the touch. For him it was a poker that stabbed in his brain burning and rusty. The culprit did not hear him. Pitilessly he was pulled along, away from the lake, away from the whimpering Vincent and his gang, away from this place where blood and saliva had been shed.

The only thing his sore senses registered was the heat of fingers clutching around his wrist like a fetter of sinew, skin, and (too slow) throbbing pulse, dragging him away.

Then nothing for a little while. Nothing anymore ...

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"Ouch!" it promptly slipped from Will's lips when the wet towel dabbed his cracked lips with its fluffy material. It did not detract Hannibal from his activity at all. When Will finally flinched from the increasing pressure, he took one hand and held his head temporarily in position so that he stayed in place and could work properly. Will would have had plenty of reasons to complain about the strange fingers in his tuft and rebel, but he did not. He had seen with his own eyes what Hannibal was able to do. And when he could break a boy's arm like a toothpick in his young rage, what would he be capable of when he was older? Something told Will that he should not find out, especially not with his own body as display. And yet ... there was another, interested voice inside that wanted to see this transformation. He liked this voice not as much as the first one.

They were in Hannibal's chamber, he, sitting on the bed with his legs dangling loose, Hannibal standing in front of him and discreetly wiping away the tracks of past battle. Hannibal was the only boy who had been freighted into a single room, mostly because his nightly screams had woken up the remaining children and caused unnecessary turmoils. What emerged from it were small revolts no warden wanted to take care of. Therefore, Hannibal had also gotten the room standing apart from the rest. But even if the walls swallowed most noises, Will occasionally heard a hollow demolition of his tortured cries. He knew that Hannibal had a voice he just never used. Will would have liked to know why, but the chances that Hannibal would tell him, were quite low…
Anyway, why did he care? He had hardly exchanged five sentences with this guy (a one-sided conversation) and two days ago they had been so alien to each other as careworn brats compulsively jammed into one building could possibly be. They did not know each other nor did they want to. This was a one-off. It actually puzzled Will that Hannibal had not left him buried in the grime after the fight.

While Hannibal washed away the crusted blood from his wound Will's curious gaze climbed over the room's interior. It was sparse as usual, and yet here and there he recognized a personal detail enclosing other edges and corners. He found papers and a piece of coal that

lay on a worn desk. The papers were probably stolen from one of the wardens, the piece of coal snatched by a swap transaction with one of the older children. On one of the sheets were curved lines to be marveled at, circling an unsuspecting form. Will would have liked to get a better look at it. Instead, his instinct told him abruptly to raise his arms in defense as Hannibal was about to pick his glasses from his nose. **(**He should consider himself happy that they had not broken during the brawl. No one would have cared about buying him new ones.) His reaction, however, did not rattle Hannibal. He methodically conducted Will's arms back down with one hand while putting his glasses on the rotting dresser beside them.
Will's lips turned into a thin, pale line. He blinked. Several times. Everything around him changed into a tangled structure of blurred particles, spilling into each other and grayish splashes of color.

"I can't see without my glasses." he protested. He already fished with one hand toward the dresser when Hannibal took a firm hold on him again. Slowly, Will found the elder stretched a point.

"Hey, I want my glasses! I want to *see*." it blurted stubbornly from him and he stood up. A second later two hands touched his shoulders and pushed him back, but this time he struggled. He snatched at Hannibal's fingers, wanted to bite them, but dead on time Hannibal was enthroned above him and pressed him into the thin mattress nailing his arms above his head. Suddenly Will was very quiet. He looked at him. At least he *thought* he was looking at him, because he only differed cream patches from darker counterparts. He swallowed. Memories of what Hannibal had done with Vincent emerged from obscurity and built incredibly clear in front of his mind's eye.

"Will you hurt me now? Like you've hurt Vincent?" he asked. It was a purely logical question. He wanted to be prepared for this at least.

Hannibal was silent. *Of course* he remained silent. Then, a rapid movement from left to right. A shake of the head? Will took it as such. He sighed with relief though his muscles still acted tense.

"I'm afraid when I can't see anything." he explained softly. He craned his hands in rehearse, fidgeted. Hannibal's grip stayed adamant. "I ... when the tanks came, I once dropped my glasses and it took me hours until I've found them. All this time shots banged through the air and people screamed around me and babies cried ... and I crawled across the floor and only thought *The glasses. Where are my fucking glasses!?*" He looked up and hoped that his gaze met Hannibal's.

"I want to see who kills me before I die." he said flatly. Hannibal did not move. Will cleared his throat. His tongue felt suddenly dry and scratchy. "S-So that I can spit at their feet before it happens." he added hastily. And would have liked to seal his lips if he had been capable of that.

Why do I tell him that? He did not know it himself. Perhaps because Hannibal was speechless in the truest sense of the word**.** Which meant he could reveal nothing. The mutes were bad snitches.

After all, his words made a difference. The pressure on his wrists pulled away, and he perceived Hannibal descending from him. Will inhaled involuntarily and sat back upright. He was still surprised when an edgy, fragile object was dropped into his open hand. He clenched his fingers around it. His glasses.

“Thanks.” he said, and put them on. His surroundings sharpened again and Hannibal’s face waited merely inches from his own. It encompassed no readable emotion but features that recalled unhewn marble. Finer lines than most children had at this age. Only the eyes gave away bloody crumbs of what skulked behind the hushed veneer. Will looked at the wounds Hannibal had carried away from the fight himself. On his right cheek formed a swollen, violet blue blot, eagerly reaching out to approach the Adam's apple, while on the left temple a brownish trickle of blood oozed where the skin was torn. The lower lip was red and thick, but not damaged further. Will found that the boy still looked quite healthy, referring to the fact that he had been captivated by four attackers like a limping antelope by a pack of hyenas. He was impressed.

From the corner of his eye, he saw how Hannibal grabbed the towel again to continue his former work. Will stopped him gently by hindering the cloth with the flat of his hand, as it approached him. Hannibal's eyes were unfathomable, but he thought to recognize a flicker of annoyance over his progressive disobedience.

“Wait.” he asked. He made an extravagant gesture. “That's enough. Your turn.”. He smiled at him kindly. “Your wounds are worse than mine.” he added, as if he’d need to remind Hannibal of that.

Hannibal did not smile back. He stood motionless, with the damp cloth, already slightly pink colored by blood, in his hand and stared. The brown in his iris circulated in dark waves. He seemed to think. Then he nodded slightly, handed the towel to Will and sat next to him on the bed, maintaining the upper body and waiting patiently. The bed squeaked clamoring under both of their weight. Glad to be able of making at least little concessions with Hannibal, Will acted promptly and brushed away some earthy welts from his forehead. One of the boys must have rammed his face into the mud. Will clucked his tongue disapprovingly at the thought**.** Hannibal endured the procedure – till Will cleaned the blood remaining on his brow. He jerked back as if bitten by a mad dog. Will closed his eyes for a brief second. A fragmentary sensation washed over him - an idea of burning and itching. He knew it was not his own.

“Please hold still.” he said. “Yes, it burns a bit and you don’t like that, but I'll be very careful. I promise, okay?”

Hannibal’s eyes widened with a splinter of startled surprise. Will knew that kind of surprise already. It was reflected by everyone when they attended his… *quirk* for the first time. He did not like it in particular, nor how others responded to it. The majority chose distance when **he** did not ask for distance. It made him feel lonely.

“Why did you help me? We have nothing to do with each other.” he asked to distract Hannibal from his previous 'discovery' and to steer the topic to safer climes. Hannibal did not elaborate in that. He was still strangely fixed on Will. The younger boy just shook his head. “That's fine. I’m very grateful. Without you they had surely killed me.” He laughed as if

itwas a great joke, but the sound did not reach his eyes. Hannibal just looked at him. Interrogative? Will blinked abruptly downward, centered on a position at Hannibal's shirt collar where a mud-colored stain dried. He reached out to rub it away, but it stayed unchanged. “Well, I’m used to it. I always tend to run fast enough before they can catch me. Well, usually.” he muttered, more to himself than to the elder boy. He dabbed Hannibal's lower lip, as if it was made of porcelain. The swelling went back gradually, but it would still take one or two days to vanish. Will had enough practice in assessing such details correctly. He had lensed too often in the mirror while his injuries healed on their own.

He sincerely doubted that one of the wardens would ask them about their wounds or vet them, so he could only hope they’d heal one way or another**.** Although the dark flowering on Hannibal’s cheek looked very wicked…

After Will had removed the coarsest residues, Hannibal stood up and walked over to his desk, gripping one of the wrinkled papers that were waiting there. Will watched intently as he took it with him and let it finally waver in front of his face. Will adjusted his glasses a little higher on the bridge of his nose and narrowed his eyes. The drawing on the sheet showed the blurred outline of a bird-like creature, holding out its far spread wings as a threat, shambling to someone with opened beak. It took a few seconds. Then, he understood.

“Was it because of the swan?” he asked. “Did you want to protect it?” Hannibal took the paper and put it back on the table. Will looked after him. “But this is great! I like the swan too…We can feed it together tomorrow. Would you like that?”

It was a shy question. Will was not adept to speak out such invitations loudly. He had done something spontaneous, and only time told whether he’d regret it or not.

Hannibal turned his back to him, but the younger one could imagine that he was rarely asked for a meeting like this. They were both basically loners, just varying between different extremes. Biting his lower lip (and immediately cursing after because his teeth almost brought back a gush of blood), he also rose and stepped into the middle of the box-like room. His eyes darted to the window at random. He came closer, and pierced out.

“Look.” he said. He pointed a finger at the cold rain of chunky flakes that generously poured across the shimmering earth. “It snows.” It was the first time in two weeks that it snowed. Will liked the snow. Its neutral color and consistency buried everything ugly what the war had left them with a layer of pure, unblemished white. He wondered if his father was out there somewhere and watched the snow falling as well, thinking of his boy. His mother had died when she stepped on a forgotten mine. It had broken her into measly scraps of flesh and blood. His father had disappeared for months. He missed both of them very much.

He heard Hannibal move and stand behind him. He felt his presence looming on his back like a rock, but abstrusely, it drilled him with no fear. He straightened his shoulders, and simply accepted.

He could not know that Hannibal did not watch the snow ... but him. And only him.

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After that day, Hannibal stayed on Will's side and vice versa. It was as if they had concluded a silent agreement in his room, oaths, acting without words and not more than subtle glances. It did not matter to Will, on the contrary, he was glad. He did not understand why, but he felt flattered that Hannibal tolerated him though he had caught a tiny glimpse into his cranky being, and received many more of them in the following days and weeks. That they had some situations where they understood each other without even sharing a glimpse was not a foregone conclusion. The more time Will spent with Hannibal, the easier it was for him to guess his thoughts or to interpret the gloom in his eyes. He got used to him like the internal clock of the body accustomed to a sleep ritual, pretending to get up every day at seven clock in the morning. Soon they were like a tandem, two souls that searched rest and employment in the company of each other. Will had never experienced such a relationship before, especially not one that lasted for more than a few weeks. And when he thought he finally bored Hannibal, he was wrong, for every day the elder came back and sat next to him at the table as soon as he saw his silhouette. They met Vincent and his gang often, but with proper distance welcomed by both sides. Vincent had to wear a discarded sling for several weeks, a lasting gift that made him impale Hannibal with looks that did not seem human at all. They were crossed with animalistic hatred. Will did not mind, as long as there was some range between them. He was not thrilled to repeat the scene by the lake and he hoped Hannibal thought so too. When he asked him about it, he just kept silent and bowed his head to the side, as if in trance. Will had learned that Hannibal did this when he wanted to appear blankly. Will did not buy it anymore. Nevertheless, he never got a serious answer about this.

But there were also developments that were less uneasy for him. The other children in the orphanage had never taken special efforts to befriend or pay attention to him otherwise, even when he sat at dinner next to them and restlessly poked with a fork in his beans. He was air for them, a shell of wasted space, producing carbon dioxide and sweat and heat. But now, when one of them only dared to approach him at a narrower range, Hannibal gave him or her such a withering glance, that they all took flight immediately. As if this was not enough, he evolved the inhospitable habit to intimidate anyone who ever ventured into Will's vicinity, something that affected the wardens as well. And if one of them was unfair or rude to Will, dubious accidents happened afterwards, many more of bloody than childish nature.

Once Will had gathered his courage, he confronted Hannibal about it.

"First, you can't look at everyone as if you'd want to flay them alive." he had explained him reproachfully. He was aware that Hannibal hated to be scolded like a disobedient dog, so he deliberately chose a polite tone. "Secondly, it will soon stand out among the adults that those accidents **are no accidents**. You have to be careful. I don't know what they'll do to you when they find out." He thought of Vincent and how he had squealed about the cause of his broken arm (of course he had assumed the role of an innocent lamb and Hannibal was the uncultivated lion). As Hannibal said nothing (what a surprise) and Will's words remained unheard, they had locked Hannibal up for five hours in a windowless chamber that was exclusively used for punishment. Many of the children scraped with their nails against the

locked door then and became disoriented, went crazy, shivering and kneeling in the puddle of their own angst. Hannibal had beared these hours without a single sound and had left the darkness as if he had just taken a long walk in the evening sun. He immediately went to Will and they had shared the sausage he had pilfered from dinner and slid into his sleeve before. He sighed at the memory. Sometimes it seemed to him as if they had discussed such things without even being around each other, which was not normal. But what could be called *normal* in times like these anyway?

“They’re not all like Vincent. You can’t punish anyone just because he's not nice to me. You get in trouble and I don’t want that. I'm **not** worth your trouble.” he had argued as simple as possible.

Hannibal had looked at him in silence. His face as unbiased as a blank sheet of paper. Will narrowed his eyes to slits in slight annoyment.

“No, Hannibal, I’m serious. **Don’t** put yourself in danger because of me, do you understand that? “

Hannibal did not tell him whether he understood or not, nor did he nod or shrug. He just pulled him along as the great bell rang and called for dinner. And Will let himself be pulled by him.

Two months passed where frosty winds blew from north and the countryside sculpted into a single, bluish nugget of ice and névé. These were peaceful months. Months in which the severity of winter increased and Will and Hannibal fed the standards of their unmolested coexistence. Neither of them admitted that it did them good, yet they never thought about separation in any way. It got around quickly and soon it was an everyday scene for the kids, seeing the two walk or stand side by side. They found it only to be logical that *the freaks* talked to each other, but they never dared to say it out loud.

One day, Will noticed something that concerned him. Hannibal seemed paler than usual lately, he ate little and, apparently, slept even less. Every time Will looked at him in the morning he saw dark circles, pushing the eyeballs in grave deep caves. The result was that once twinkling eyes became dull and soulless. When Will pinpointed a finger-long scratch on Hannibal's cheek then he asked him if he wanted to accompany him to the lake.

And he turned not a single time as the elder followed him like a second shadow.

***

Due to low temperatures the lake was covered by a thin layer of translucent ice. The swan was not there and Will hoped it had found a place where it was safe and calm**.** He scraped his toe thoughtfully in the gravel that was attached to the shore.

“Your nightmares get worse.” he said, without looking at Hannibal. He had pushed his hands into his pockets. Hannibal said no word. Will turned to face him. His expression was soft. “Please don’t lie to me. I can see you.”

Hannibal did not contradict him. He merely looked from his tired eyes and somehow it made Will angry. It also made him helpless.

Then, it made him sad.

“I can sneak into your room tonight, if you want me to. Perhaps the nightmares are better then.” he offered. He knelt down and gathered some snow in his hands, formed a ball. He threw it into the air and caught it again. “They pass on, curl like smoke and divide among us. Like a hanky-panky.” He aimed the snowball on a bare tree stump and threw it. The pulpy projectile sailed two inches above the stump and hit a rabbit huddling behind it. The innocent animal jumped up as if stung by a tarantula and fled into the undergrowth of the adjacent forest.

Hannibal did not smile but Will could see the patronizing amusement flashing in his pupils anyway, and he was glad that there could still flash something. He stuck out his tongue. *Smug idiot.*
But also he found his own failure to be funny and laughed. He did not know that his laughter was exactly one of those things Hannibal’s incarcerated spirit was denied to do. It was as if the elder laughed **through him** and Hannibal saw it. He saw everything. The frost-reddened cheeks. The warm breath that rose steaming in the cool air. The chaotic braid of chestnut curls writhing in wild order around Will’s head. The pale skin of his neck and the sky-coloured vein throbbing underneath. And the eyes. These bluish gray, honest eyes that networked so rarely with his own for the contact was too tight, too intimate and disturbing to the fine, fragile nerves and the bo ,who wore them inside like porous garniture, struggling for his sanity.

He liked what he saw.

After Will had finished laughing, he suddenly became very quiet. He considered further steps. He liked Hannibal and knew he incarnated a perfidious kind of torture he did not understand in its entirety for it was so brutish and ominous and not tangible at all, but he was smart enough to realize it was the cause that brought these terrible nightmares. Will only knew the extent of his own sweaty hallucinations when they chased him through the night. And they were bad already.

... He did not want Hannibal to experience worse than what already had happened to him. Whatever it was.

“I’m serious, Hannibal.” he stressed. He pulled himself together and hooked two fingers in a fold of Hannibal's jacket sleeve, tugged it as he had done earlier on the skirt of his mother when he wanted to be heard. “You don’t have to be alone. That’s what friends are for, right?” He smiled and showed his uncertainty.

It was at this moment when Will truly admitted that Hannibal had actually become a friend to him. The first proper friend he ever had in his young life. A friend who *could not even pronounce his name*. And **he** could not recognize his voice, nor the way he spoke or laughed or cried. If Will closed his eyes, they were so strange and distant again as they were before ... at least it was what he told himself.

Hannibal's eyes widened slightly at his words, but he made no move to shake off Will's hand. They were beyond that point. All his thoughts divulged was a vague, thoughtful nod. And for Will, this confirmation was enough. He felt something truthful bloom in his chest that day. And to his luck and shame he'd never be able to forget it entirely.

***

It was about two clock in the morning when Will's eyelids flipped open and he was miserably searching for air as Hannibal's hands tied around his throat and pressed the eyeballs out of his sockets. He sat on top of him as he had when they were at odds over the incident with the glasses, but now Will could see every detail clearly for he had forgotten to take them off before they went to sleep.

The crescent moon climbed with its rays through the room like the buried bones of a mutilated skeleton and adorned Hannibal's notorious face with scrawny claws on forehead, nose and mouth. His lips were a pencil-thin line, his eyes opened but clouded with something that Will had no name for but instilled fear in his veins like rumbling poison. Frantically he tried to lash out, to escape from the suffocating grip yet Hannibal was like stone and hopelessly cruel in his subtle intransigence. He made choking sounds, fruitless attempts to call Hannibal's name, so that the sound of his voice might convey his mind back to present.

Blackness crouched at the edges of his vision and stretched with every second he failed to receive oxygen. His own pulse hammered brutally in his ears and soon he believed to feel his heart jump on his tongue.

"ni ... bal." he choked out. His hands were shaking. And then his arms slid lifelessly off Hannibal to bounce to his sides. His limbs underwent an internal struggle, a revolt and, at last, surrender. The high and low response of the human organism ringing the start of a well-known end.

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It was seconds before the final breakdown as the moonlight roamed over Hannibal's eyes and he blinked in irritation. It was as if he would wake up from hypnosis, controlled by another entity.
He looked at Will, the unmistakable style of how his hands squeezed his throat, the frail bluish shade that hovered on his skin and his weak, wheezing suction of air. And the glassy
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mottled eyes, expecting a place where the living had no access to.

Immediately he removed his hands and jerked back almost falling off the bed, disgusted with himself and what he almost had done. He only took a fleeting breath as Will did and the coughing and gasping of his fanning and compressing lungs set in. Mutely, Hannibal opened and closed his lips as if he would say something. But he didn't.

He watched when Will's skin slowly, very slowly took on its whitish-pink complexion and found himself in a reasonably normal respiratory rhythm. Just then he ventured closer, reached out with his hand. A pleading gesture. He wanted to tell him, wanted to explain why he had done this and that he was not the one he had wanted to hurt. *Not* him.

But when he touched his knee, Will eluded him as if his nails were knife edges.

"No." he whispered. He was hoarse from the strangulation. Hannibal stopped abruptly, watching as Will let out a rattling breath. His eyes glowed with something that Hannibal detested even more than simple hatred. It was distance. "I can't. I ... I have to go."

He rose from the bed and the urge to grab him, repatriate him by force and *just keep* was enormous, but Hannibal did nothing. He acted like a dove, kneeling puppet, which threads had been cut off. He listened with half an ear as the door slammed shut and bare feet made their way down the hall in a hurry. He did not move an inch.

That night he had no more nightmares. Because that night he was not sleeping.

***

"Hannibal, open the door!"

No reply. Desperately, Will knocked for the fifth time, so firm and loud that his ankle throbbed.

"Hannibal, I know you're in there! Let. Me. IN!" He was so furious that he kicked the door and the hollow echo made him jitter. He hit his big toe and bit back the pain. He was far too angry for that.

Three days had passed since that night Will had chosen a voluntary distance between Hannibal and himself. He'd only have to think, weigh, to pick up the pieces that had been broken by the elder's action. He was literally torn between what his survival instinct told him and what his mind longed for. He missed Hannibal. He felt the emptiness he had not known anything about before someone filled this cruelsome gap. He was aware of the demons that lurked behind Hannibal's facade. Did he really want them to catch and spin him like a spider spinned its prey in a cocoon of silk? When he ate, swallowing still hurt and sometimes he caught himself raising his hand to his throat and touching the dark marks. Hannibal's fingerprints had immortalized an asymmetric tattoo on his skin, a chain of topaz and amethyst, and although Will knew it faded in time he would still touch his throat every now

and then searching for them. Because of the phantom pain that would saturate his memory.

He had never been strangled before. He did not want to repeat the experience. He should go and forget.
... But he was his friend. He never had a friend before.

Will knocked. The sixth time. He paused. He took a deep breath.

“HANNIBAL.”. A volley of half-hearted blows rained down on the wood. “LET ME IN LET ME IN LET ME **IN**!” He screamed his mind to the heavens and did not care who heard him.

He received what he always had. Silence. Finally, he stood with his hands glued on the door and listened to his racing heartbeat. A curled strand stuck to his sweaty temple. He was trembling all over, feeling terrible and exhausted. The attack and the resulting surge of feelings and grievances did him no good. It was all the same to him.

“Fine,” he whispered so quietly that it resembled a mockery to his previous shouting. “Then - that's it. Rot in your room, I don’t mind. I don’t need you. I don’t need *anyone* !”

He pushed off and staggered a few steps back until he caught himself. It was too hot and his knees reminded of curdled custard. He wiped his face with his shirt sleeve. He felt like crying. He swallowed it by force, looked out of a window. Outside the sun was shining, but it was still cool. His jacket lay somewhere under his bed. It did not matter. He’d have a flu, so what? He had to get out of here. When Hannibal did not want him, he would not beg for it. He had his pride. In passing, he gruffly wiped his wet eyelashes. Again and again.

He had told him before. Often. He was used to this.

***

“Hello, Willy.”

Will slowed his speed for a second while Vincent greeted him mockingly as he discovered him, sitting on one of the outdoor benches. He wrapped his arms tightly around himself and moved on. He had a headache.

A few heartbeats later he heard footsteps behind following him. He could have almost groaned in exasperation. Vincent's company was really the last thing he needed now.

“It's been a while, heh? Where is your *guard dog*?” it clung to his ear. **“**Had a little row with him? The pretty necklace could be proof for that. Nice. Suits your eyes.”

Will did not respond. Or, at least, he tried to.

“It was an accident. My fault.” he dodged and irked he had not taken the jacket. The collar would have covered his neck from prying eyes.

Vincent increased his pace and suddenly he was beside him, watching as the older boy loosely shrugged a shoulder. “Fine with me.” he said. Then he smiled unnaturally wide and snapped his fingers.

“Grab him.”

The next moment, Will was surrounded by Vincent’s sycophants. Before he could even grasp the thought of escape they pounced on him from every direction and screwed their icy fingers into the flesh of his arms. He opened his mouth to scream which earned him a fierce blow to his jaw. They lifted him up until his shoes only casually scraped the earth as they dragged him away. Will’s breath came haltingly, the train on his arms ached like burning pinpricks. He could have beat himself black and blue. He had run straight into a bloody ambush. A rarely stupid idea to go outside alone where he knew that there were living creatures that could not be kept in by the nocturnal layer of dream and delusion.

He felt Vincent’s arrogant satisfaction burn like a coal carpet under his eyelids the further they brought him away from the orphanage. He did not know what they were up to but it was certainly not good. First shards of fear scratched into his stomach.

After a time Will could not fathom, yet seemed like a millenia anyway, they stopped. The two guys holding Will in check released their grip and he slumped down, his face in the snow. When he tried to sit up, his glasses were milky with molten crystals. Around him was forest and chewed off rock. No lake, no castle, no familiar form to recognize. They were in the middle of nowhere. Meaning that no one would find his body until spring had replaced winter and he began to… *smell*. He crawled on his knees, but someone tucked his fingers into the waistband of his pants and threw him on his back. Will stared up at Vincent in confusion and was abruptly quiet when he saw a silvery knife light up in his right hand.

“We have some unfinished business, kid.” said his counterpart cheerfully. He walked to him and crouched down, the tip of the knife lingering in his direction. Will wanted to slide rearward, but Petrov and Vladislav were there to stop his attempt. His breath curled up in the air and yet a clip of sweat ran down his neck. Vincent painted wavy lines with the knife as if he’d draw the contours of Will’s face. “Awesome, now we can finally continue where we left off. What do you think? Should I put something from you in front of Hannibal’s door as a last gift? Your ear, perhaps? Your nose? Your little dick?” He reached forward with his free hand and plucked at Will's hair. Will gritted his teeth. “How about a streak of your lovely curls?” Vincent continued. “Very classical.”

Will snorted.

“Leave him alone. You can’t hurt him through me. I don’t matter to him!” he hissed. Actually, he was not so sure about that but it was definitely better if Vincent would believe it. Hannibal was able to cope with these guys, but not ... not when they surprised him in the middle of the night. Not when he was alone and shouted. Not when they *lured* him. Will shuddered at the thought.

Vincent tapped the knife thoughtfully against his lips.

“Ooh, you sound very sad saying such things.” he purred. His green eyes captured a feigned sympathy. “Could have told you that. Psychos like him need to change their cunts like they change their linen.” He shook his head sighing dramatically. “Well, and you don’t even have a cunt. Tragic.”

Happily he tore at Will’s thatch so that his eyes were truly directed on him.

“Let's start with the hair then.” he said. “Then comes whatever I’m up for. Maybe your ear ... “ He reached out and chopped off a curl. Will looked at it sailing down into his lap with bright eyes. He was suddenly very still, very still ...
Vincent laughed at his expression.

“So? Want to beg me for your life?” he whispered in glee.

Will looked at him. There was nothing to read in his gaze. He leaned his head back, lifted his shoulders.

He spat in his face.

Vincent's smirk wiped from his skin like plastic wrap.

What happened next, became a blur to Will. He got a fist slammed on the left cheekbone, sweeping his glasses from his nose and threw them somewhere beside him.

Shortly after the onset of screams filled the air**.** Warning shouts and roars of the other boys echoed, footsteps in the snow and shoes and bodies sinking into its powdery coat. Hands that clenched and fanned, prepared for violence. Mud and noise. Breaking limbs and skin. A yelp and howl. The sour smell of panic. Will tried to stand, but without his glasses he could see nothing and would have run into death with flying colors. So he forced himself on his knees and crawled**,** scanning every inch within reach for the glasses. His cheek pulsed, his ears whistled and hummed with this high screeching, beeping tone he knew. He had heard it before back when they were at the lake, back when he was at home, crawling like a stag beetle over wooden planks instead of snow, while babies had cried. His nose was running and his hot tears sucked into his sleeves, while their undersides drowned in damp cold. He did not realize that he wept. He just wanted everything to stop, cease, and that this was a bad dream and he only needed to wake up in his own bed with his mother and his father. Far away from the war and far away from this place.

He felt a tug on his ankle, a hand grabbing him and he cried out as it dragged him backwards. His nails were clinging to frost and lumpy ice that watered between his fingers. Heavy, wet breath on his neck.

He did not want to die. He did not want to feel pain. He **did not want to.**
He thought of Hannibal.

Then he heard a very dull, final sound. Then, a crash.

The grip on his ankle disappeared. Rest entered in his freed flesh. He was hyperventilating and his own sound of inhaling air bounced like an avalanche of debris against his diaphragm. Control was out of place here.

He was grabbed by the shoulder and turned on his back. He raised his fists, but stopped when his glasses were gently pressed onto the bridge of his nose. The world cleared. Hannibal knelt next to him. His clothes were torn in several places, his mouth too red and shining beads of sweat on his forehead. His eyes were hard as malachite. He was breathing heavily.

That was very stupid. scolded his expression and the frown squeezing itself reproachfully between his sparse brows. Will made a hiccup-like sob and hid his face in the offered neck flexion, trembling, breathing in his scent. It was backed by blood. He was awfully cold - Hannibal was warm. That was all he felt. Or wanted to feel.

“You’ve shut me out.” he muttered in exhaustion. The functions of his body wound down to the standard’s minimum to protect him due the over-stimulation of his senses. “Never… do that… again.” Then he closed his eyes and unconsciousness tucked him comfortingly inside its black, floating tentacles. His body went limp.

Hannibal carried him on his back all the way back to the orphanage.
When one of the wardens wanted to separate the strange pair, he almost lost his right index finger, so he let them be.

He was just a child of many, the man thought. If the smaller boy died, it merely meant to cram a mouthful less until a new one was washed ashore by the ashen waves of destruction and parted love.

***

When Will woke up his skull buzzed as if he'd breed a hornet's nest inside his brain. He was in a narrow bed, dry and wrapped in a blanket. He lay on his side, leaning his face towards the window. Fingertips ghosted in morbid fascination over his skin where his bruises were waiting. He heard someone breathe behind him. He turned to the second person in the room and groaned as each tiny shift hurt. Even a single blink hid another tweaking core, but he took it in stride.

He looked into Hannibal’s eyes. Hannibal looked back, his fingers still palming his neck. For a little while they remained like that, doing nothing except observing each other and listen to the borrowed life running through their veins. Will felt the deathly silence that hung over Hannibal's head like a cloud, dark and full of rain. He had a black eye and scattered scratches arose on chin and cheek, probably added by the dirty fingernails of the other boys. Dried blood seethed in his hair and a couple of strands bathed in a reddish copper brown.

Will saw him parting his thin lips and exhaling slowly. He was unwholesomely glad he was

here.

“It was stupid of me to say you shouldn’t put yourself in danger. You *are* the danger.” he said. It was a spontaneous cognition. Hannibal did not react. He blinked. Then he made a move to withdraw his hand, but Will closed his fingers around his wrist, so it could not depart. He knew that Hannibal was thinking about the last night they had lain in one bed. And what wound his escape had left within him. Not as visible as the marks on his neck but still ... impressive. “It’s okay.” he whispered, and he was a little surprised himself that he really meant it. “I know you did not want to hurt me. It was the fault of the nightmares, not yours. I ... I was just scared, you know? Frightened by *your* fear.”

Hannibal was silent. Will replied with a sigh. An idea exploded in his subconscious, rose like smoke. He did not really want to ask, but he had to.

“Is Vincent... dead?” Hannibal did not even shrug. He only repeated the strokes across his throat. This time, the initial fascination mingled with a hint of certain tenderness. It tickled a bit, but Will avoided the complaint. And he did not probe further. Instead, he gave a weakened smile with a sad component.

“I've spat on him, as I told you.” He braced himself up to a fragmented laugh. “God, you should have seen his stupid face.”

Hannibal stiffened almost imperceptibly. Something scattered in his pupils, fused and Will was startled when the hand of the elder suddenly jerked away from his throat and he found himself in a bone-breaking hug. He felt fingers in his hair and just above his pelvis and a mouth breathing shallow and steady on his neck. His nose pressed against Hannibal's chest and he could hear the throbbing of his heart. It beat a bit faster than usual.

It was the first time Hannibal touched him this way. In all those months they had shared relatively little body contact. It never seemed to be important or necessary for them. Now he held him as if he wanted to melt his form and hide him inside, like a protective shell that imprisoned the fragile caterpillar in good faith till its wings, burgeoning of pupation, were ready for flight.

Will closed his eyes and let it happen. He leaned his cheek on the warm chest and accepted this new *being*. He was not afraid.

“Yes.” he mumbled quietly. “I’m sorry, too.”

***

Later, Will learned that Vincent was not dead, but it might have been better for him if he had. Someone had broken his spine, damaging essential nerve endings that made it impossible to walk for many months. Whether he had recovered from his injuries or not was unclear, but Will never saw him again in the yard or play outside otherwise. When his friends were asked if they knew who had done this to him, they shook their heads and denied hastily to have

been in reach when the 'accident' happened.

After that day, Will slept in Hannibal’s bed despite the constant risk of being strangled again and he tried his best to wake him up as soon as his screams began. He calmed him when his blindly groping hands demanded him to and he tolerated it when Hannibal held him so closely that he threatened to crush his ribs (which he never did).

He soon learned that sentences like *You are awake now* and *Everything’s fine* worked effectively on soothing his roiling mind.

Before Hannibal fell asleep again while often clinging him to his chest, Will muttered the mantra that had become his nightly habit until he followed the breaths of the elder boy into the land of his own reddish sanded illusions.

I'm here , again and again. Unbroken.

I'm here ...

***

Spring came, and with him Hannibal’s uncle Robert Lecter, who had specially arrived from France to get his traumatized nephew into an orderly household.

Will stood beside Hannibal while they watched the meager luggage being loaded into the car. Inside, Mr. Lecter was still speaking with the head of the orphanage, pointing out papers and money. Will did not know what to feel. On one hand he was happy that a part of Hannibal's family was still alive and took him to a place, determined to be prettier than the brittle, unpopular desert the castle portrayed despite the enshrined life therein. On the other hand it broke his heart to see Hannibal depart from him, wondering at the same time how pure the pain was that he felt. It was different than a broken finger or ripped up lips. He felt wounds that could not be found and stretched visibly on his body. They were inside of him and he did not know how and when they healed. Or if they would ever heal at all.
He forbade himself to cry, so he blinked more often than necessary and snuffled when the telltale salt flickered in his eyes. Some of the sob coupled-breaths he replaced with a cough here and there.
Hannibal was devoid of any emotion as he always was. Almost, Will would have hold it against him, but just *almost*. He knew him. He could not be angry.

“Will you come back? Someday? “ he said and in the same moment in which these syllables left his tongue he realized how stupid this question was. Who wanted to come back *here*? It would have meant pure masochism.

Hannibal dipped one of his toecaps into the earth. The snow had turned to water and seeped the ground long since. Will already spotted the first stalks with unopened flower buds in their vicinity. He hoped they would soon flourish and fulfill their real beauty.

He fumbled in his pocket and promoted a crumpled, tiny item. Shyly reaching out his arm to Hannibal he opened his hand. Inside was the curl Vincent's knife had chopped off his hair. He had found it in one of the folds of his shirt back then and kept it ever since.

“Here. This ... Vincent cut it off, before you came. Want to have it? As a, well,… little reminder?” he asked softly. It was embarrassing for him somehow. This painful urge to be kept in memory.

Hannibal stared at the curl for a precarious moment. Then he took and pushed it carefully into the breast pocket of his coat (contributed by Robert) and hugged him one last time. It was long and tight. Will had wished to hear him pronounce his name, only for once. But he didn’t.

He looked after Hannibal when he got into the car and listened to the engine’s groan. And when he thought the car to be away far enough, he threw his mastery overboard and bawled with such grief and volume that Boris gave him a punitive slap on the back of his head. Will did not care and cried even louder and more fervently until he felt empty and drained as he never had before. The sun sliced through the dreary clouds and its golden light burned like fire in his wet eyes.

He was convinced by the safety of death that they would never see each other again.

And yet this same safety should be the cause that would rejoin them. In a distant, distant future.

When spring returned.

End Notes

Hello ^^

Hope you liked it... will you stay with me till the second part? Maybe there'll be some erotica in it *eyebrow wiggle* ;3

Love,
Med~

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!